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EFNEP — Success Stories

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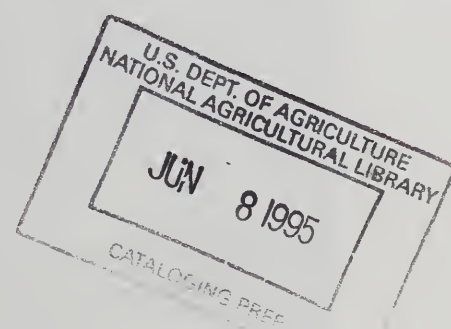


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EFNEP Success Stories

Since its inception in 1968, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has helped millions of limited resource families and youth improve their diets by teaching them to plan and prepare nutritious meals that include a variety of foods.

Families have also learned how to improve their food shopping and budget management skills. But that's not all EFNEP has done.

EFNEP has helped program participants to change, grow, experience a sense of accomplishment and increase their self-esteem. Many have improved their lives by finishing high school, enrolling in college or other training programs, finding employment, and leaving welfare rolls.

This publication tells a few of the stories of EFNEP participants and Nutrition Assistants, often in their own words, and the impact EFNEP has had on their lives. For additional information about EFNEP or to obtain a copy of "EFNEP — Impact and Accomplishments," contact your local county Extension office, the State Leader of Home Economics at your State Land-Grant University, or the Extension Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC.

EFNEP has helped program participants to change, grow, experience a sense of accomplishment and increase their self-esteem.



Single Parent Families

The many dimensions of EFNEP enable limited-resource families to improve the quality of life for their families and communities.

One Knox County homemaker is a 20-year-old single parent with a 3-year-old child. She and her child live in a housing project in Knoxville, Tennessee. Family income is estimated to be \$150 per month plus assistance from the Food Stamps and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs. At the time of enrollment in EFNEP, this homemaker spent most of her day watching television with her young son. By the time she graduated from EFNEP she was knowledgeable about nutrition and planned her meals using a daily meal guide. Because of her interest in nutrition, she returned to school, received her general equivalency diploma (GED) and is presently enrolled in nursing school. She proudly displays her EFNEP graduation certificate next to her GED certificate. Within a year she plans to be working as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and have a third certificate on the wall.

Two examples of the many dimensions of EFNEP that enable limited-resource families to improve the quality of life for their families and communities are Aaron P. and William M., both single parents of three



young children living in Massachusetts. Each father came to EFNEP through the assistance of a cooperating agency. Aaron, who had some interest in health and nutrition, initiated his EFNEP contact in response to a poster located in the Department of Social Services office. With the support of an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant, Aaron has persevered through many personal problems to become a more conscientious care-provider. He plans and encourages greater consumption of fruits and vegetables for his children. He has modified his own diet to reduce fat and sugar. Aaron

has also worked diligently to incorporate better food budgeting and safety practices into daily routines. He took a special interest in raising a small garden during the summer months. Most importantly, Aaron has taken greater interest in his children and shared his enthusiasm for learning about good food with his sons.



William's situation was slightly different. He originally enrolled in EFNEP to regain custody of his 3-year-old son. He needed EFNEP to teach him skills to prove his competency for caring for his children. In addition to improving his own food behaviors to reduce fat and increase vegetable consumption, William has a better understanding of the role nutrition plays in the growth and development of his children. He has also been able to deal more effectively with food allergies experienced by one of his sons. With EFNEP's support, he has made better use of food programs, refilled with the local Food Stamp office and became aware of the SHARE program in his area. William's personal success has gone beyond his original goal. In addition to knowing that he can provide for his children, William has become a competent contributor to the community and other family enriching organizations. William is now an active member in his church, helps his children with their homework, and participates in their school programs. He now values the importance of nutrition, health, and a strong family unit.

Cindy, a single parent from South Dakota with three small children, began taking EFNEP classes to improve the nutrition of her family. As a result of this program, Cindy improved her meal planning skills. She learned to divide her monthly Food Stamp allotment, budgeting her resources more



wisely. Throughout her EFNEP experience, Cindy gained skills and self-confidence to take control of her life. Just recently, with encouragement from the EFNEP staff, Cindy completed her licensed practical nurse (LPN) degree and is no longer dependent on Food Stamps to feed her family. Many other South Dakota limited-resource families have been assisted through this valuable program.

Just over 3 years ago, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant enrolled a single parent homemaker who was a recovering drug addict with a young son to raise. The Nutrition Assistant states: "She was eager to learn the new ways of living without drugs and being happy. And this included nutritious cooking for her little boy. She was ready to cook at each scheduled visit. Her EFNEP material was always laid out on the table and her mood was always cheerful." She was happy to see the Nutrition Assistant. The homemaker completed the class and the Nutrition Assistant still has the pleasure of working with her now as she has become a Parent Facilitator for the Head Start Program.

In South Dakota, the Mental Health Center referred a single father to EFNEP. The referral was based on the condition of his 9-year-old son who was being treated for hyperactivity. The father lacked skills in food buying and food preparation and was serving a large amount of high fat, high sugar foods to the child. Today, the father has learned how to plan meals, shop for foods, and prepare foods that will be most beneficial for him and his son.

Helping Families Stretch Food Dollars

Scott County, Tennessee, is a rural, sparsely populated area in the Appalachian Mountains, where unemployment is high and literacy rates are low. When one family, two parents and a small child, enrolled in EFNEP their estimated income was \$418 per month plus Food Stamps and WIC. Food Stamps typically lasted 3 weeks and the homemaker's recall (record of dietary intake) was low in dairy products, fruits, and vegetables. After completing the program, the participant reported that Food Stamps lasted the full month and the family saved \$25 weekly on their grocery bill. While enrolled in EFNEP, the homemaker learned to preserve foods safely using water-bath and pressure canners. She learned to prepare a variety of salads with fruits and vegetables and main-dish casseroles. Her family also enjoys a greater variety of foods. Because of better food choices, she has lost 25 pounds.

One homemaker enrolled in the Michigan State University Extension EFNEP comments: "Thank you for the program EFNEP. I have learned a lot with the program. I know how to budget out my Food Stamps to go further using the Master Mix and Magic Mix. You fix food that you have in the house instead of going to the store every day."

"I used to put leftovers in the refrigerator and forget about them. Then, that food goes for garbage. Now I know how to use up leftovers and save on Food Stamps."

"Since I started the program I've been saving \$40-\$50 a month on food. It's a good program. A lot of people I know don't know how to cook food. This class helps a lot."

"...You fix food that you have in the house instead of going to the store every day."





Marlis Wheeler, an EFNEP Homemaker in Pulaski County, Arkansas, had never grown a garden until Shirley Cleek, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant, got information on gardening from the Extension Office for the Wheelers to study. Mrs. Cleek also gave the Wheelers garden seeds from EFNEP. "It is almost unbelievable what this couple produced from this little spot of land," states Mrs. Cleek.

According to Mrs. Cleek, the Wheelers harvested 700 pounds of Irish potatoes and 4-5 bushels of mustard, spinach, turnip greens, and kale. Some of their other crops included broccoli, cauliflower, corn, English peas, carrots, and three pepper and seven squash varieties. Mrs. Wheeler filled 2 freezers with vegetables from the garden. She also attended several canning kitchens and learned how to can, which enabled her to preserve over 100 quarts of vegetables. When the garden was at its peak, Mrs. Wheeler spent only \$36 that month for milk, bread, and meat. The Wheelers were also able to donate food to 12 families who were in need of food. The Nutrition Assistant encouraged Mrs. Wheeler, who was reluctant at first, to enter the EFNEP Canning Fair. She won several blue ribbons. Winning the ribbons was the icing on the cake. Mrs. Cleek is very proud of Marlis for all her hard work, and for helping her family and aiding others. The entire experience helped to restore Mrs. Wheeler's self-esteem.



Working With Diverse Communities

In Maricopa County, Arizona, EFNEP implemented The SUPER CUPBOARD, an 8-week nutrition education course for inner-city families. The SUPER CUPBOARD was a cooperative venture between EFNEP, a local food bank, and local church groups. The 10 families involved in this course were hard-to-reach, inner-city families, many of whom had substance-abuse problems. All of the lessons were conducted in Spanish. Demonstration supplies were provided by the food bank and day care was provided on site. GED's were achieved by those who chose to enroll in classes. Follow-up with families was continued to assure families stayed connected in the community, and most of the families continue to stay involved in a network with one another. One of the graduates reported she had learned "...how to prepare foods not using a lot of fat and what my body needs to stay healthy." Another wrote, "I learned how to plan my family's meals. I learned to read labels and compare prices at the store."

"...Native American people want to learn new ways of doing things, if they can get hands-on experience in their own environment."

On the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North and South Dakota, the supervising agent for EFNEP reports that boxed macaroni and cheese and potato chips are very constant items in Native American diets. Many people have not learned to prepare even the most basic food items. Thanks to EFNEP, people are learning to use commodity foods rather than taking them to the dump, which happens far too often. The agent reports that "people are clamoring to take the series of classes, which proves that the Native American people want to learn new ways of doing things, if they can get hands-on experience in their own environment."

On the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in South Dakota, EFNEP has made dramatic changes in the lives of program families. One homemaker had been on Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) and other support programs for a number of years. She was living a day-to-day existence, so common on the Indian Reservation. The EFNEP Nutrition Assistant worked with the homemaker and she graduated from EFNEP. Armed with increased nutritional knowledge and a certificate recognizing her completion of the program, she applied for and obtained a job as a cook for the Head Start program. Today, her salary with Head Start means an adequate living for her family, and she no longer receives welfare.





Working With Pregnant Teens and Adults

The Kentucky Department of Human Resources referred an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant to the home of a runaway teenage mother. The Nutrition Assistant found Mary and her 14-month old son, Tom, living in a sparsely furnished apartment. The playpen served as Tom's bed and clothing was strewn everywhere, because there wasn't any place to store it. Mary did not respond to the Nutrition Assistant's offer of help.

After several visits, the Nutrition Assistant noticed Mary spent little time with her son other than to change his clothing and feed him when he demanded attention. The EFNEP Nutrition Assistant worked with Mary, showing her how to interact with her son. Soon after Mary began taking an interest in the baby, playing with him, talking to him, and cuddling him.

As the visits continued, Mary and the Nutrition Assistant discussed nutritional needs, prepared different foods, planned menus using weekly specials, and made grocery lists. Mary learned and practiced good nutrition through puzzles and word games. The Nutrition Assistant helped Mary turn an old shoe box into a money management box. She now keeps receipts and other vital information in the box. When she almost lost her WIC eligibility because she missed too many appointments, Mary realized how important it was to be organized and keep an appointment calendar. Mary also learned to shop at yard sales for household items, used furniture, and clothing for her and the baby.

When Tom was 2 years old, Mary gave birth to a girl. During and after her pregnancy, she attended an Infant Stimulation Class. As a result, Mary's mothering skills are excellent. Since then, Mary joined several other food-related group programs, earned her GED, enrolled in adult business training to prepare herself for employment, and works 1 day a week to earn extra income.

Mary is a much wiser manager. She painted, papered, and decorated her apartment, and even made charts to help her develop better house-cleaning habits. Mary now has a few leftover

She learned and practiced good nutrition through puzzles and word games.





Food Stamps each month and is shopping for and preparing better meals—something she was unable to accomplish before her EFNEP training.

Last year Mary and her children enjoyed a very special day. For the first time since leaving her parents' home, Mary spent Christmas with her family.

Nikki, a pregnant teenager in Georgia, enrolled in EFNEP in the Teenage Mothers Nutrition Education Program. When the Nutrition Assistant first met Nikki, she was in her fourth month of pregnancy. Nikki had lost her first baby in the seventh month of pregnancy. She was 14, underweight, and had barely recovered from the miscarriage when she became pregnant again. She needed to learn to take care of herself so she and the baby would be healthy.

Nikki went into premature labor three times during her seventh month of this pregnancy. She stayed in the hospital for 6 weeks. After being released, she rested, took her vitamins, and continued her weekly lessons with the EFNEP teen pregnancy Nutrition Assistant. She worked on changing her diet to include more milk products and vegetables. She grew stronger and was better able to deliver a healthy baby. Her baby was born healthy at 7 pounds 4 ounces.



Toni was 12 years old and pregnant, when she met Virginia EFNEP Nutrition Assistant Brenda Seamster. In talking with Toni, Brenda learned she was interested in nutrition and wanted to learn more about it. Brenda worked with Toni for 12 weeks, and encouraged her to return to school after the baby was born, which she did.

The following year, Brenda recruited Toni to give a beef demonstration for 4-H competition. She worked with Toni for 4 weeks. Toni gave a speech on the benefits of beef in our diet and prepared a meat loaf for the audience. The previous summer, Toni was afraid to talk to the Nutrition Assistant. Now, she had the confidence to stand in front of an audience. She won a first place ribbon and a trip to the State 4-H conference where she participated in many group discussions.

Currently, Toni is attending school and her grades have improved. She has been nominated for the 4-H "I Dare You" award, and has won another trip to the State 4-H Conference. She credits EFNEP for giving her the opportunity to achieve.

Grace Cardona, EFNEP Nutrition Assistant in New Mexico, writes about a homemaker she enrolled in EFNEP. "When I met Cecilia, she was 7 months pregnant and mother of a preschooler. She came from Mexico and spoke only Spanish. When I realized she had no food available, I referred her to the emergency Head Start assistance program, WIC, and Commodity Foods. Her entry dietary recall score was low. Cecilia completed all of the Eating Right is Basic 2 lessons including Eating Right for Two. She was so grateful to have the materials in Spanish, and was anxious to complete the lessons and receive her certificate."

"The day I went over to complete her final dietary recall, I didn't realize at first that she was in labor. Nevertheless, she was determined to get her certificate. As soon as I presented her certificate, she went to the hospital. Two hours later she gave birth to a healthy 9 pound 11 ounce baby girl. Even though she had bottle fed her first child, she indicated she wanted to try breastfeeding this baby. Later, I scored Cecilia's last dietary recall and Survey 2 and saw that her diet had really improved. Not only did she graduate from EFNEP that day, but also gave birth to a healthy baby girl."





Iowa State University Extension and six other health- and education-related agencies formed a coalition to address the problems of teen pregnancy in Dallas County, Iowa. Agencies involved include: Public Health Service, Perry Schools, Area Education Agency, Dallas County Hospital, Home Care, Greater Opportunities, and Iowa State University Extension. Iowa State University Extension provided a grant to pilot the Healthy Babies project.

Anna, a native of El Salvador, came into the Healthy Babies program referred by the school nurse and social workers. She had no papers and was, therefore, not eligible for any assistance. Anna was living with an adult male, and her mother had gone back to

El Salvador, so there was no woman in the household to support and assist a pregnant teen. During the program meetings, Anna was very impressed with the nutrition information presented, and fascinated by the videos on development and pregnancy. She expressed a commitment to a healthy baby with a high birthweight. But the story does not end here. The network of assistance created by the supporting coalition accomplished the following: the social worker at Dallas County Hospital helped her to go through immigration and get papers, to get in touch with Title 19, WIC, and to contact a physician. A Public Health Nurse who had assisted in teaching the program began to visit Anna as part of her caseload.

The nurse recruited a volunteer, a physical education teacher, who had experience with teens and together they became Anna's labor coaches. They went to prenatal classes and through labor and delivery with her. Anna began to attend church and the parish hired a community organizer to work with the Hispanic population in Perry. Anna was visited and supported by members of the parish. Her supporters worked with the school social worker and school nurse to ensure that Anna could attend school and finish her senior year. Anna delivered a healthy baby boy, 7 pounds and 14 ounces. Support from a community coalition and their available resources and options made the real difference in the lives of this young woman and her child.

Special Needs

When an EFNEP homemaker's son in Perry County, Pennsylvania, was in a bicycle accident, the homemaker was advised by her doctor to have the boy follow a nutritious diet. Because the boy's mouth was wired shut, his diet was limited. The homemaker asked the EFNEP Nutrition Assistant for help in planning and preparing foods for her son. Today this young man's face has healed nicely. Because of this experience, this homemaker continues to use the knowledge she gained from EFNEP. The homemaker now plans her menus and makes a shopping list before going grocery shopping. Food shopping has become a family outing and learning experience. On Food Stamp and Check Day, each family member gets a special treat. The treat is a trip to the grocery store salad bar to make their own dinner instead of going out for "fast food."

"Through EFNEP, I've learned how to eat right and fix healthy meals for my family."

Just a few years ago, Juanita Tahah was in poor health, confined to a wheelchair because of a bad hip and excess weight. Today she is walking and able to care for herself and her family. She says she owes her recovery in part to a hip replacement and in part to knowledge gained from participating in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension's EFNEP program.

Through the program, Tahah has learned about good nutrition, meal planning, and what to look for on food labels. Tahah says she takes a while in the grocery store, because she reads labels on everything she buys. To her delight, she has lost more than 30 pounds since enrolling in the program. "I wouldn't be where I'm at now, that's for sure," she says. "Through EFNEP, I've learned how to eat right and fix healthy meals for my family."





Sally, a battered wife and mother of three children living in South Dakota, became withdrawn and isolated, a typical problem associated with victims of domestic violence. She had lost all confidence in herself and didn't want to leave her home for any reason. After she learned basic nutrition, menu planning, and food safety through home visits with her EFNEP Nutrition Assistant, the overall health of the family improved. The EFNEP Nutrition Assistant talked Sally into attending monthly meetings with other past and present clients of EFNEP. The Nutrition Assistant asked Sally to become a volunteer for a new program called "Mothers and Their Children" and Sally agreed. The day before the meeting, a South Dakota blizzard meant Sally and her older children had to shovel their car out of the snow to get to the program. With shoveling complete, only to find that the car wouldn't start, Sally walked 12 blocks to the Extension Center to fulfill her volunteer work. This was a woman who hadn't wanted to leave her home for any reason a few years before. She was so committed to the program and what it meant for her family that she wanted to help others.

Beyond Nutrition Education

A New Jersey homemaker named Angie wanted to change her life. When the EFNEP Nutrition Assistant went to Angie's home for her usual lesson, she noticed that something was wrong with her physically. She was not as attentive and responsive as other times. Angie stated that she was tired of the way she was living and wanted to change her life economically, emotionally, and physically. The Nutrition Assistant explained to her the importance of eating proper foods and getting the right vitamins. She told Angie that eating from four food groups would give her the nutrients she needed and that eating healthy food could affect her lifestyle. Angie continued to say that she wanted to stop taking welfare and get a job. She was a person who never worked and had no experience, yet she was a good writer and spoke both English and Spanish fluently. She also had three small children whom she loved dearly. Angie listened to the Nutrition Assistant and started to eat food with key nutrients and began to feel good about herself. Her self-esteem improved. When the Nutrition Assistant began to notice the change in Angie, she encouraged her to speak to her case worker about helping her find a job and a day care center for her children. Angie did find a job as a secretary at a doctor's office and now earns her own money. She feels great, emotionally and physically. Her life has changed for the better because an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant took an interest in Angie's personal development and her nutritional well-being.

Her life has changed for the better because an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant took an interest in her personal development and nutritional well-being.

An Hispanic woman with limited knowledge of the English language, entered EFNEP, feeling shy and insecure. During her EFNEP classes she interacted with English speaking homemakers and as a result her English improved. She became very enthusiastic about EFNEP and made many nutritious recipes for her family. She also began to participate in other home economic programs and graduated from both EFNEP and basic clothing construction classes. She is now taking an advanced course and is very proud of herself for what she has accomplished. Today, Angie is a new person and has also brought two more friends to Extension programs in the Virgin Islands.





Three years ago, Maria was a very insecure person. She came to the United States with her husband and children and did not speak English. Neither she nor her husband had job skills. When Maria came to this country, she thought life would be easy, but it wasn't. An EFNEP Nutrition Assistant told Maria about EFNEP and the Private Industry Council (PIC) where she could learn English. She completed her English requirements, earned a GED certificate and an EFNEP certificate from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, NJ, and completed an office procedures course. Now she has a good job and is very happy about the improvements in her life. She also helped her husband get a job through PIC. Maria is now able to help her family financially and provide them with a nutritious and balanced diet.

It was a Nutrition Assistant's dream come true when the manager of the Bolivar Road apartment complex in Springfield, Missouri, in cooperation with the City of Springfield, offered the free use of an apartment for educational activities. The offer also included utilities and transportation for the handicapped. Participants at the complex can take part in weekly sessions on nutrition. Each 2-hour session includes a cooking demonstration providing the homemaker an opportunity to learn new skills and taste new and different foods. The program also features a weekly youth group, which expands during the summer to different age groups meeting throughout the week. Childcare is provided informally by group members taking turns watching the children.



The manager of the apartment complex commented on the notable changes in people's attitudes since these meetings began. A support group concerned with each other's needs has developed among individuals and families who had formerly remained isolated. Now, if someone is missing from the group, someone else from the group checks on that person. The group has grown to the point that there is usually a capacity crowd of about 20. The excitement of the participants has increased the attendance of both adults and youth.

As a young child in Virginia, Katrina was abused emotionally. Her grandmother was given legal custody of her. The emotional problems caused Katrina to become very withdrawn and unwilling to communicate with others.

When Katrina enrolled in a 4-H EFNEP group, she was very reluctant to participate in food and nutrition activities. The Nutrition Assistant encouraged her to enter a local 4-H contest. She said she did not like to cook and was afraid to speak in front of a group. With some encouragement, Katrina prepared a salad and entered the local 4-H contest. She won a blue ribbon which excited her. She later competed in the Eastern District 4-H contest and won a red ribbon. Katrina has been recognized in her church for her accomplishments in 4-H.

Katrina's grandmother attributes the great progress made by Katrina to the EFNEP and the 4-H program. Her grandmother also states that Katrina has become more outgoing and happy.

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Shannon is 15, one of four children in a single-parent home. Her family participates in Food Stamps, ADC, HUD, and every agency where they can get help. Her mother, who also grew up in a similar situation, never learned to cook or grocery shop. Shannon likes to cook and has taken a great interest in planning and preparing meals. For that reason, although she was in the youth program and enrolled as such, Jody Young, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant in Arkansas, took a lot of extra time with her. She was enrolled as a homemaker because she had taken the family meals as her responsibility. This little girl learned to do wonders with commodity foods. She can cook "from scratch" as she says. She has done so much to raise her self-esteem. The Nutrition Assistant is proud of the work she has done with Shannon, and knows things will be much better for the whole family since Shannon has learned so much about food preparation and nutrition.

Shelly Simmons became involved in New Jersey EFNEP because her mother was a program homemaker. At age 8 she completed the 10-lesson youth group series taught by the Nutrition Assistant working in her area. Shelly continued her involvement in EFNEP, progressing to the preteen and teen lesson series. During one summer Shelly trained to become a teaching volunteer to work with EFNEP youth. She worked another summer at the Hudson County Welfare office, and continued to work with EFNEP as a volunteer. After graduating from high school, Shelly took computer programming courses at St. Peter's College and the Urban League. She is using her food, nutrition, and food safety knowledge in her present career working in the catering department of a local restaurant. She spends late afternoons as the assistant supervisor of an after-school tutorial program. As a result of her involvement in EFNEP, Shelly received a certificate and several awards from the program. She received further recognition when she was asked to serve as a teen representative to a group convened to address the problem of teenage pregnancy in Jersey City.

When Nayda Ayala was 14 years old, she enrolled in an EFNEP 4-H Club in Puerto Rico. She participated in training, lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions, achievement days, parades, state conferences, member interchange, and several times held membership on the 4-H Board of Directors. Then the family moved to another part of Puerto Rico, and her mother took a job outside the home. Most of the household jobs fell to Nayda, who, thanks to her EFNEP 4-H training, did an excellent job.

At home and busy, Nayda noticed a group of kids who seemed to spend all their spare time doing absolutely nothing. Concerned that they would get into trouble, Nayda contacted a Nutrition Assistant to find out how to go about organizing a 4-H club in the neighborhood. She got the club organized and was elected as its first president. Under her energetic leadership, the club took part in beautification campaigns, educational tours, conferences, fundraising campaigns for cancer and muscular dystrophy, mothers' and fathers' day activities, fashion shows, and visits to hospitals and senior citizens' homes.

Eventually, Nayda enrolled in the adult EFNEP program and earned her certificate of completion. This success, plus her enthusiasm for the subject matter, encouraged her to enroll in the Catholic University of Ponce to study Gerontology. She has remained an active EFNEP volunteer and hopes to become a registered nurse. She credits her long association with EFNEP and 4-H as a prime motivator for her ambitions.





Nutrition Assistants at Texas A&M University's Cooperative Extension Service EFNEP conducted special 2-day inservice trainings for a group of Head Start Center directors, classroom teachers, and teacher aides. "This is what we've needed for some time, commented one Head Start Health Coordinator...your materials are more user-friendly than our present curriculum guide—this is just great!" The initial response was extremely positive. As a result, programs were scheduled at additional Head Start Centers. The teachers used a variety of creative teaching techniques to conduct the learn-by-doing group activities that are outlined in each lesson guide. At the Worth Heights Center, teacher Jonetta Isom developed a special foods and fitness unit to introduce their nutrition project. To create the proper atmosphere for her class, several different learning centers were designed to represent a "weigh-in" area, aerobics exercise room, a creative corner (which gave each child an opportunity to make their own individual fitness

book) and a resource room with "reading" materials. The children especially enjoyed the hands-on cooking experiences they've had as they prepared their afternoon snacks using the EFNEP recipe ideas.



Along with the children's group activities and individual projects, nutrition information was shared with parents in a newsletter series to encourage their participation. Meetings for parents were organized and conducted by Nutrition Assistants to introduce EFNEP's ongoing adult activities, and to promote group involvement that would help strengthen the family units.

Fort Worth preschoolers learned about good nutrition from some "New Kids": Accordion Kid, George Gorge and Nicky Persnick, Amantha Samantha, Snacking Mouse and Orange Bird. All have something fun to share. Adapted from Michigan State University's materials, the "Eating Right is Basic" lessons included information about what foods to eat and why, how to cook simple dishes and nutritious snacks, and how to be safe and neat in the kitchen.

Unexpected Benefits

For Latasor Green, an EFNEP Nutrition Assistant in Hamilton County, Tennessee, a job with Extension was a dream come true. Not only does she have a steady job, but a new home to call her own. As a young mother of two children, Latasor knows what it is like to live on a limited budget. Years of struggling to provide for her family made her unhappy with her life, tired of living on welfare and sitting at home. "My life was a mess and I didn't know if I would ever get back on track," says Latasor. "Then one day I found out the University of Tennessee was hiring people who lived in my housing project. I went to the Agricultural Extension Office with a small child on each arm and I got the job. Extension gave me a chance, a way to help myself and take care of my children."

"...Extension gave me a chance, a way to help myself and take care of my children."



EFNEP Extension Agent Marie Moyers saw the potential in Latasor and hired her. Latasor had been working for Extension for less than a year when she heard about a program called Habitat for Humanity. This program provides housing to individuals who could not otherwise afford to own their own homes. Those who qualify for a home through Habitat for Humanity must have a steady income and a sponsor. They must be willing to spend at least 200 hours of "sweat equity" on someone else's home to qualify for their own.

After putting in 211 hours and finding a sponsor, Latasor was accepted into the Habitat program. With the help of local volunteers from a nearby high school and 300 hours of her own time, she moved into her six-room home. As a result of Latasor's participation in the Habitat for Humanity program, EFNEP has acquired a new partner. Latasor now enrolls other families in EFNEP in the Habitat program.

Latasor is excited about what the future holds for her and hopes her accomplishments will inspire others. "There is always that first step," she says. "But once you have that willpower inside yourself, you can do anything. You really can."



NOTE: The paraprofessionals who deliver EFNEP have many different titles, depending on the State where they work. For consistency in this publication, the term "Nutrition Assistant" has been used.

The photographs in this publication are representative of the EFNEP participants throughout the Cooperative Extension System. The photographs may not portray actual individuals described in the stories.

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